



November 16, 2004

## Major Accomplishments of the U.S. Senate 108<sup>th</sup> Congress, Second Session (to Date)

*Despite Democrat obstructionism in the 108<sup>th</sup> Congress (see p. 12), the Republican-led Senate has succeeded in passing significant legislation in 2004. Here are some of the accomplishments to date from this Second Session of the 108<sup>th</sup> Congress. Items are listed under seven categories, and within each, those bills already signed into law are listed in order by law number.*

*This paper addresses only Senate actions in the Second Session (2004). Attached to this paper is a list of accomplishments from the First Session (2003).*

### CREATING JOBS AND GROWING THE ECONOMY

#### **American Job Creation Act of 2004 – P.L. 108-357**

*This law eliminates the tax regime for U.S. exporting companies that the World Trade Organization ruled in 2002 was inconsistent with the United States' obligations under various international trade agreements. This legislation is designed to replace the non-compliant U.S. international tax rules with broad-based tax relief for American manufacturers and other U.S. exporters to ensure that they remain competitive in the international marketplace and can continue providing millions of critical jobs in the United States. The delay in passing this legislation caused by Democrat obstructionism resulted in U.S. companies being subject to European Union sanctions, amounting to billions of dollars in European taxes on U.S. exports.*

#### **Working Families Tax Relief Act of 2004 – P.L. 108-311**

*The Working Families Tax Relief Act was passed to protect middle-income families from a substantial tax increase that would have occurred starting in 2005, and it reflects the Republican commitment to maintain tax relief for working Americans. The law extends several provisions of the Jobs and Growth Tax Relief Reconciliation Act (JGTRRA) of 2003, which would have expired in 2005. Specifically, the bill: extends through 2010 the \$1,000 child tax credit, the expanded 10-percent tax bracket, and the marriage penalty relief; continues the increased exemption from the individual Alternative Minimum Tax through 2005; and provides significant tax simplification by adopting a uniform definition of a "child." The bill accelerates the refundability of the child tax credit adopted under JGTRRA, and permits members of the military to include combat pay as earned income for purposes of calculating the child tax credit and the earned-income tax credit.*

**U.S.-Morocco Free Trade Agreement – P.L. 108-302**

*The U.S.-Morocco Free Trade Agreement is an integral part of President Bush's strategy to create a Middle East Free Trade Area by 2013. Passage of the Agreement is not only good for the American economy, but is a critical step forward in encouraging countries of the region to implement domestic reforms, institute the rule of law, protect private property rights, and create a foundation for openness, economic growth, and prosperity.*

**U.S.-Australia Free Trade Agreement – P.L. 108-286**

*The U.S.-Australia Free Trade Agreement (USAFTA) is the first trade agreement between the United States and a developed country since the U.S.-Canada Free Trade Agreement in 1988. It is estimated that USAFTA will generate at least \$2 billion per year for both countries by 2010. By eliminating nearly all tariffs on U.S. manufacturing and agricultural exports, this bill creates a fair and open market in Australia for U.S. producers. USAFTA strengthens America's relationship with a close ally abroad while expanding opportunities for U.S. workers and businesses at home.*

**Helping Hands for Homeownership Act of 2004 – P.L. 108-285**

*This law enhances the Self-Help Homeownership Opportunity Program (SHOP) by allowing homeowners to earn their "sweat equity"—the program's physical labor requirement for funds — by performing required construction time on other homes in the community.*

**Pension Stability Act – P.L. 108-218**

*This law reforms the previous pension funding formula by changing the rates used to calculate pension-plan contributions from 30-year Treasury bond rates to conservatively invested, long-term corporate-bond rates.*

**Safe, Accountable, Flexible, and Efficient Transportation Equity Act of 2004 (H.R. 3550) – In Conference**

*By renewing authorization for highway, bridge, and transportation safety projects, this bill invests in the nation's transportation infrastructure, creates jobs, and spurs economic growth.*

**Internet Tax Nondiscrimination Act (S. 150) – Passed Senate and House**

*This bill extends the moratorium on state and local taxation of Internet access, as well as on any multiple or discriminatory state and local taxes on Internet-based transactions until October 1, 2007. The bill also modifies the definition of "Internet access" by carving out voice and other services provided over the Internet, and it provides limited "grandfather" protection for state and local governments already taxing Internet access. As a result, the majority of American Internet users would continue to benefit from tax-free Internet access, and companies would not be required to withhold state sales taxes on consumer purchases over the Internet (though consumers would still be liable for any "use taxes" imposed by the state in which they reside).*

## **Nomination of Alan Greenspan to be Chairman of the Board of Governors of the Federal Reserve System – Confirmed by unanimous consent**

*During his first 17 years as chairman of the Federal Reserve, Alan Greenspan has implemented monetary policies that have helped the United States achieve unprecedented levels of economic growth while avoiding high rates of inflation. He was confirmed unanimously to serve a fifth term.*

## **KEEPING AMERICANS SAFE AT HOME AND ABROAD**

### **At Home**

#### **Justice for All Act – P.L. 108-405**

*This law increases protection of crime victims' rights by eliminating the substantial backlog of DNA samples collected from crime scenes and convicted offenders. It improves and expands the DNA testing capacity of federal, state, and local crime laboratories and increases research and development of new DNA testing technologies. This legislation ensures that crime victims' concerns are adequately addressed in the judicial process by codifying the rights of victims and providing the means to enforce those rights.*

#### **Crime Victims' Rights Act – Title I of P.L. 108-405**

*This bill establishes statutory rights for victims of federal crimes and authorizes funding through FY09 for federal and state programs to protect the rights of crime victims. Passage is a critical step forward to balancing the scales of justice. Victims of federal crimes would have the following rights: to be reasonably protected from the accused; to have reasonable, accurate, and timely notice of any public proceeding involving the crime, or of any release or escape of the accused; to be reasonably heard at any public proceeding involving release, plea, or sentencing; to have full and timely restitution as provided in law; to proceedings free from unreasonable delay; and to be treated with fairness and respect for their dignity and privacy.*

#### **Homeland Security Appropriations – P.L. 108-334**

*In an effort to make this country safer, this law provides important funding for the Department of Homeland Security, including \$1.6 billion in spending above FY04 levels on Security, Enforcement, and Investigations. Other spending includes: fund management and operations; preparedness and recovery; research and development, training, assessments and services; and other general provisions.*

#### **Department of Homeland Security Financial Accountability Act – P.L. 108-330**

*This legislation will improve the financial accountability of the Department of Homeland Security (DHS) and establish requirements for the Future Years Homeland Security Program. It ensures that DHS will abide by important financial management systems requirements, and that its Chief Financial Officer is a presidential appointee, subject to Senate confirmation.*

**Law Enforcement Officers Safety Act – P.L. 108-277**

*This law enhances the ability of trained officers — including those who are retired or off-duty — to keep themselves and their communities safe by exempting qualified current and former law enforcement officers from state laws prohibiting the carrying of concealed handguns.*

**Identity Theft Penalty Enhancement Act – P.L. 108-275**

*By increasing penalties for those who steal identities to commit immigration violations, Medicare fraud, and other serious crimes, this new law addresses the growing identity theft problem, which victimizes 10 million Americans each year. The law imposes a higher maximum penalty for identity theft used to facilitate acts of terrorism.*

**Flood Insurance Reform Act – P.L. 108-264**

*Flood damage mitigation efforts are bolstered by this law, which amends the National Flood Insurance Act of 1968. Passage of this law encourages efforts to reduce future losses on properties for which repetitive flood insurance claim payments have been made.*

**Unborn Victims of Violence Act – P.L. 108-212**

*This law protects pregnant women and their unborn children by creating a new federal crime whenever an assailant injures or kills an unborn child during the commission of a federal crime of violence. It guarantees that the unborn child is recognized as a victim of crime distinct from the pregnant woman.*

**Omnibus Appropriations for Fiscal Year 2004 – P.L. 108-199**

*Despite Democrat obstructionism during the first session, Congress passed the appropriations bills for Fiscal Year 2004. These laws include funding for Agriculture, Commerce/Justice/State, District of Columbia, Foreign Operations, Labor/HHS/Education, Transportation, and VA/HUD. This legislation was critical this year in providing increased funding for education, veterans' health care, and the President's Global AIDS Initiative.*

**National Intelligence Reform Act (S. 2845) – Conferees Appointed**

*This legislation reforms the federal Intelligence Community by creating a National Intelligence Director (NID), a National Counterterrorism Center (NCTC), and a National Counterproliferation Center (NCPC). The NID will serve as the head of the country's intelligence community and the principal adviser to the President on intelligence matters. The NCTC will coordinate the sharing and analyzing of critical information relating to counterterrorism. The NCPC will oversee interdiction activities for weapons of mass destruction.*

**Intelligence Authorization Act (H.R. 4548) – In Conference**

*This bill authorizes appropriations for fiscal year 2005 for intelligence and intelligence-related activities of the United States Government, the Community Management Account, and the Central Intelligence Agency Retirement and Disability System. Authorization of Intelligence funding each year is critical to support the Administration's strong commitment to ensuring the safety of the American people.*

**Public Transportation Terrorism Prevention Act (S. 2884) – Passed Senate**

*This bill authorizes the Secretary of Homeland Security to award grants to public transportation agencies to improve security, and provides \$3.37 billion for capital and operational security improvements.*

**Maritime Transportation Security (S. 2279) – Passed Senate**

*Although the Maritime Transportation Security Act was signed into law in 2002, many of the security requirements have yet to be developed or implemented, and lack of coordination and established standards and goals has led to confusion for the maritime industry. This bill would require the Departments of Transportation and Homeland Security to report on the implementation progress of the Maritime Transportation Security Act of 2002 (MTSA), and would clarify planning and reporting requirements. Federal agencies will complete detailed studies of maritime security issues, review security plans, and correct deficiencies.*

**Rail Security Act of 2004 (S. 2273) – Passed Senate**

*This bill will improve rail security by requiring the completion of a vulnerability assessment and security plan for the rail system, and by authorizing funds to address immediate security needs.*

**Homeland Security Technology Improvement Act (S. 1612) – Passed Senate**

*In order to provide state and local law enforcement agencies with the tools necessary to protect Americans, this bill establishes a technology, equipment, and information transfer program within the Department of Homeland Security. Law enforcement agencies protecting borders, ports, and high-threat areas would be able to more easily secure cutting-edge detection and monitoring equipment.*

**Indian Child Protection and Family Violence Prevention Act (S. 1601) – Passed Senate**

*This bill addresses the continuing problems of child abuse and family violence on Indian lands. Its purpose is to build and improve comprehensive tribal programs for child abuse prevention, prosecution, and treatment, to establish more rigorous criteria for background checks, and to identify impediments to reducing child abuse.*

**Senate Intelligence and Homeland Security Oversight (S. Res. 445) – Passed Senate**

*This package of reforms will improve the effectiveness of the Select Committee on Intelligence in its oversight mission; it also creates a Committee on Homeland Security and Governmental Affairs in the Senate.*

**Nomination of Porter J. Goss to be Director of Central Intelligence – Confirmed 77-17**

*The confirmation of Porter J. Goss is a critical step in the concerted, ongoing effort to restructure the intelligence community in a way that would best guarantee a safer America. Director Goss is uniquely qualified to lead the CIA at this turbulent time. His broad range of experience, which includes service as a CIA case officer and as Chairman of the House Permanent Select Committee on Intelligence, has prepared him for the challenge of reforming the intelligence community and restoring confidence in this important work.*

## **Defending and Promoting Freedom**

### **National Defense Authorization Act for Fiscal Year 2005 – P.L. 108-375**

*This law authorizes \$447.2 billion for FY05 for military activities of the Department of Defense and Department of Energy, including programs to combat terrorism and for the continued development of a national missile defense system to be put on alert this year. It also provides for an across-the-board pay raise of 3.5 percent for military personnel. Additionally, this bill adds \$925 million for several force protection measures and authorizes \$25 billion in a contingency reserve fund for continued operations in Iraq and Afghanistan.*

### **Oil-for-Food Program Investigation – Title XII of P.L. 108-375**

*So that those who are guilty of wrongdoing are held accountable, this legislation calls on the U.N. to make its Oil-for-Food documents available to congressional investigators. This legislation allows Congress to conduct a thorough investigation of the United Nations' Oil-for-Food Program, whose real beneficiaries appear to have been Saddam Hussein and corrupt U.N. and foreign officials rather than the Iraqi people.*

### **North Korean Human Rights Act – P.L. 108-333**

*This legislation promotes human rights and freedom in the Democratic People's Republic of Korea (North Korea). This law authorizes the President to award grants to private, nonprofit organizations to promote human rights, democracy, rule of law, and the development of a market economy in North Korea, and includes provisions to protect North Korean refugees and assist those in need.*

### **Department of Defense Appropriation Bill for FY 2005 – P.L. 108-287**

*This law provides \$416.2 billion in new spending authority for the Department of Defense, including \$25 billion in an Emergency Wartime Appropriation request from the President for costs associated with operations in Iraq and Afghanistan. Other highlights of this legislation include funding for a 3.5-percent, across-the-board pay raise for military personnel, and an overall Department of Defense end strength of 2,263,900.*

### **African Growth and Opportunity Acceleration Act of 2004 – P.L. 108-274**

*This legislation extends the benefits of the African Growth and Opportunity Act (AGOA) to 2015. By encouraging trade between the United States and countries in sub-Saharan Africa, AGOA plays an important role in creating jobs and stimulating economic growth in the world's poorest region. In addition, AGOA promotes democracy and human rights by requiring that countries enact certain reforms before they are eligible for its benefits.*

### **Renewal of the Burmese Freedom and Democracy Act – P.L. 108-272**

*As a means of promoting democratic rule and freedom of expression in Burma, this law sanctions the ruling Burmese military junta and supports and recognizes the National League of Democracy as the legitimate representative of the Burmese people.*

### **Foreign Operations Appropriations (S. 2812/H.R. 4818) – In Conference**

*This bill provides \$19.6 billion for foreign operations, export financing, and related programs for FY05, including \$2.4 billion to address the worldwide HIV/AIDS problem, divided among*

*the Global HIV/AIDS Initiative, the Child Survival and Health Programs Fund, and the Global Fund to Fight AIDS, Tuberculosis, and Malaria. The Millennium Challenge Corporation, which provides development assistance to those countries that rule justly, invest in their people, and encourage economic freedom, is an Administration priority and is provided \$1.1 billion in this bill.*

**Nomination of John D. Negroponte to be U.S. Ambassador to Iraq – Confirmed 95-3**

*Ambassador John Negroponte is America's top diplomat to Iraq, operating out of a newly established American mission in the country. The role of the U.S. Mission in Iraq is to support the Iraqi people and government as they take control of their own affairs.*

**Nomination of John C. Danforth to be U.S. Ambassador to United Nations – Confirmed by unanimous consent**

*Ambassador John C. Danforth is America's permanent representative to the Sessions of the General Assembly of the United Nations, and the representative of the United States in the Security Council of the United Nations.*

**Support for Our Troops and Veterans**

**Veterans' Compensation Cost-of-Living Adjustment Act of 2004 – P.L. 108-363**

*Consistent with the pledge to provide critical care for veterans and their families, this law increases the rates of compensation for veterans with service-connected disabilities and the rates of dependency and indemnity compensation for the survivors of certain disabled veterans.*

**Military Construction Appropriations – P.L. 108-324**

*This law provides \$10 billion for high-priority military constructions projects, including alteration, improvement, operation, and maintenance of military family housing. This bill also serves as the source for the U.S. share of the NATO Security Investment Program.*

**Combat Pay Tax Relief – Section 104 of P.L. 108-311**

*This tax-relief package includes combat pay in the calculation to determine refundability related to the Child Tax Credit.*

**Campaign Medals for Operation Enduring Freedom and Operation Iraqi Freedom – P.L. 108-234**

*This law provides for the establishment of separate medals to recognize members of the military for their service in defense of the nation in Iraq and Afghanistan.*

**Troop Leave Domestic Transportation Reimbursement – P.L. 108-220**

*This law directs the Secretary of Defense to reimburse members of the armed forces for round-trip transportation expenses incurred within the United States in connection with the Central Command Rest and Recuperation Leave Program.*

**Veterans Health Programs Improvement Act (H.R. 3936) – Passed Senate and House**

*This bill increases the grants to benefit homeless veterans, and improves programs for management and administration of veterans' facilities and health care programs. The bill's goal is to ensure continued improvement of the quality of benefits and health care for our Nation's veterans.*

**Indian Veterans' Charter (S. 2938) – Passed Senate**

*This bill grants a Federal charter to the National American Indian Veterans, Incorporated.*

**Veterans' Benefits Improvements Act of 2004 (S. 2486) – Passed Senate**

*This bill improves and enhances education, housing, employment, medical, and other benefits for veterans, and improves and extends certain authorities relating to the administration of benefits for veterans.*

**Veterans Affairs Health Care Personnel Enhancement Act (S. 2484) – Passed Senate**

*To alleviate the cyclical problems the Department of Veterans Affairs has had with recruitment and retention of physicians, dentists, and nurses due to inadequate pay, this bill simplifies and improves pay provisions for physicians and dentists and authorizes alternate work schedules and executive pay for nurses.*

## **REDUCING RED TAPE & OTHER PRO-CONSUMER INITIATIVES**

**Federal Workforce Flexibility Act – P.L. 108-411**

*This law is designed to assist the Federal government in recruiting and retaining a high-quality workforce. It will allow agencies to offer recruitment or relocation bonuses to place attractive candidates in hard-to-fill positions.*

**Church Pension Plans – P.L. 108-359**

*This legislation amends current securities laws to permit churches to strengthen their pension plans through investment in collective trusts, which allows them to invest in rental real estate and other private investment offerings.*

**Taxpayer Protection and IRS Accountability Act (H.R. 1528) – Passed Senate and House**

*This bill strengthens taxpayer protection and accountability by the Internal Revenue Service through improvements in tax administration and taxpayer safeguards, reform of the penalty and interest provisions of the tax code, modernization of the U.S. Tax Court, and additional protection of taxpayer confidentiality and non-disclosure of taxpayer information. The bill also provides significant tax simplification measures and elimination of more than 60 obsolete tax-code rules.*

**Federal Trade Commission Reauthorization Act (S. 1234) – Passed Senate**

*This bill authorizes the Federal Trade Commission (FTC) to protect consumers from unfair methods of competition and unfair or deceptive acts or practices in or affecting commerce. The reauthorization allows the FTC to expand its authority to protect consumers from*



*fraudulent and deceptive trade practices perpetrated abroad, and is an important update in this age of global commerce.*

## **STRENGTHENING AND IMPROVING HEALTH CARE**

### **Pancreatic Islet Cell Transplantation Act – P.L. 108-362**

*In individuals with juvenile diabetes, the body's immune system attacks the pancreas and destroys the islet cells that produce insulin. Doctors have discovered a way to harvest pancreatic islet cells and transplant them into patients, allowing a majority of these patients to become insulin independent. Some 1 million Americans suffer from this type of diabetes in the United States. This law will increase the supply of pancreatic islet cells for research and provide for better coordination of Federal efforts.*

### **Tobacco Buyout – Title VI of P.L. 108-357**

*This legislation eliminates the federal quota and price support program for tobacco, and compensates tobacco farmers for its elimination through a buyout of existing quotas.*

### **Youth Suicide Prevention and Intervention Act – P.L. 108-355**

*This legislation responds to the tragic problem of youth suicide by ensuring that mental health care providers have the resources to identify and treat those who need help. It provides grants to states for the planning, implementation, and evaluation of statewide youth suicide early intervention and prevention efforts.*

### **Project BioShield Act of 2004 – P.L. 108-276**

*By authorizing the Department of Health and Human Services to develop and stockpile countermeasures against biological, chemical, radiological, or nuclear agents that may be used in a terrorist attack against the United States, this law provides vital homeland security fortification. The drugs, biological products, and devices included as part of these countermeasures will significantly improve our nation's ability to respond to a wide-scale bioterrorism attack.*

### **Patient Safety and Quality Improvement Act (S. 720/H.R. 663) – In Conference**

*According to the Institute of Medicine, there are as many as 98,000 preventable deaths per year associated with medical errors, costing the nation \$29 billion. This bill addresses this tragic situation by facilitating the development of a confidential and nonpunitive system for reporting healthcare errors. Medical errors can be identified and analyzed to improve patient safety, which helps prevent future errors.*

### **Family Smoking Prevention and Tobacco Control Act (S. 2974) – Passed Senate**

*This bill gives the Food and Drug Administration the authority to regulate tobacco products and address issues of particular concern to public health officials such as the use of tobacco by young people and dependence on tobacco.*

## EDUCATION INITIATIVES

### **Taxpayer-Teacher Protection Act – P.L. 108-409**

*This law temporarily closes the student loan loophole that has been allowing lenders to receive a subsidy put in place when interest rates were much higher. Now that rates are lower, the subsidy is no longer justified. The savings will be used to triple the number of loans that can be forgiven, and will be directed to teachers of disciplines facing shortages – math, science, and special education.*

### **Child Nutrition, WIC, and School Lunch Program Reform Act – P.L. 108-265**

*This legislation streamlines applications for school meal program benefits, strengthens the anti-fraud and abuse provisions in the National School Lunch and Breakfast programs, and is designed to maximize the enrollment of eligible children in the underlying programs while protecting program integrity. The law expands the Fresh Fruit and Vegetable program, expands the Summer Food Service Program, provides training and technical assistance to schools, targets benefits to low-income children, and, over the five-year reauthorization period, maintains federal spending at previous levels.*

### **NASA Workforce Flexibility Act of 2003 – P.L. 108-201**

*This law allows NASA to offer scholarships and other incentives to highly qualified students and recruits, thereby enhancing NASA's ability to attract America's best and brightest to the space program.*

### **Individuals with Disabilities Education Improvement Act (H.R. 1350) – In Conference**

*This bill provides important and long-awaited reforms to the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA). Its key improvements to the IDEA law include reductions in the paperwork burden, reductions in inappropriate litigation, increases in parental involvement and options, and a renewed focus on student outcomes.*

## STRENGTHENING THE SAFETY NET AND ASSISTING THE DISABLED

### **Homeownership Opportunities for Native Americans Act – P.L. 108-393**

*This law clarifies the loan guarantee authority under in the Native American Housing Assistance and Self-Determination Act of 1996.*

### **Access to Assistive Technology for Individuals with Disabilities – P.L. 108-364**

*This legislation continues assistance to the disabled with new technologies that make it easier to function in the workplace and society. It will support the States' efforts to improve assistive technology through comprehensive assistance programs.*

### **Service Block Grants Improvement Act (S. 1786) – Passed Senate and House**

*This bill would amend the Community Service Block Grant Act so that more emphasis is placed on reducing poverty and expanding opportunities for individuals and families to become economically self-sufficient.*

## **PROTECTING OUR RESOURCES**

### **Federal Water Pollution Control Act Amendment – P.L. 108-399**

*This law reauthorizes the National Estuary Program designed to promote comprehensive planning for long-term protection of estuaries through collaborative voluntary efforts of Federal, State, local, non-profit, and private interests.*

### **National Wildlife Refuge Volunteer Act – P.L. 108-327**

*Volunteers play a vital, growing role in the operation of many units within the Refuge System, assisting in education, habitat management, maintenance, research, and public use. This legislation reauthorizes volunteer programs and community partnerships for national wildlife refuges, and the appropriation of \$2 million a year for each of fiscal years 2004 through 2009 for volunteer programs and community partnerships administered by the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service.*

### **Tropical Forest Conservation Act Reauthorization – P.L. 108-323**

*This law works to protect the environment and relieve the heavy debt burden of many countries which must resort to exploiting natural resources to generate revenue to service their external debt. The Act authorizes the President to allow eligible countries to engage in debt swaps, buybacks, or reduction/restructuring in exchange for protecting threatened tropical forests on a sustained basis – an estimated 30 million acres of which are lost each year.*

### **Southwest Forest Health and Wildfire Prevention Act of 2004 – P.L. 108-318**

*This law directs the Secretary of Agriculture to establish institutes to demonstrate and promote the use of adaptive ecosystem management to reduce the risk of wildfires, and to restore the health of fire-adapted forest and woodland ecosystems of the interior West.*

### **Livestock Mandatory Price Reporting Act Amendment (S. 2965) – Passed Senate**

*This bill modifies the termination date for livestock mandatory price reporting and extends the current program, first enacted in 1999, through September 30, 2005. This bill benefits ranchers by increasing transparency in livestock markets.*

### **Water Resources Act Reauthorization (S. 2847) – Passed Senate**

*This bill authorizes continued appropriations to fund the Water Resources Act.*

### **Native American Programs Act Reauthorization (S. 2436) – Passed Senate**

*This bill supports the development of economic, social, and governance capabilities of Native American communities. The program helps communities begin and expand businesses, enhance tribal capabilities to promote natural environments, and preserve and restore native languages.*

## DEMOCRATS' OBSTRUCTIONISM

*As the above sample of accomplishments shows, the Republican-led Senate has made significant progress in enhancing the welfare of all Americans. Unfortunately, obstruction by Democrats has prevented even greater achievement in the 108<sup>th</sup> Congress. The minority party has continually blocked important measures, including:*

- **The Class Action Fairness Act of 2004 (S. 2062)**, which would close a loophole in federal court jurisdiction rules and create a consumer bill of rights in order to prevent trial lawyers from abusing class action procedures at the public's expense [filibustered in the Senate];
- **The Fairness in Asbestos Injury Resolution Act of 2004 (S. 2290)**, which would reduce the prevalence of attorney-driven fraud and manipulation in asbestos-related lawsuits by establishing a privately funded trust fund to compensate asbestos victims [filibustered in the Senate];
- **The Patients First Act of 2003 (S. 11)**, which would help healthcare providers afford medical liability insurance coverage by setting sensible limits on compensation for non-economic damages [filibustered in the Senate];
- **The Energy Policy Act of 2003 (H.R. 6)**, which would provide a comprehensive national energy policy that balances domestic energy production with conservation and efficiency efforts to enhance America's security and decrease our dependence on foreign sources of oil [House passed Conference Report in 2003; Conference Report filibustered in the Senate];
- **The Personal Responsibility and Individual Development for Everyone (PRIDE) Act (H.R. 4)**, which would maintain the phenomenal success of the 1996 welfare reform law by continuing to give states flexibility in providing the services that low-income families need to become self-sufficient [House passed in 2003; filibustered in the Senate];
- **The Confirmation of Highly Qualified Federal Judges.** For the first time in U.S. history, a partisan minority of Senators has filibustered judicial nominations to the federal bench, threatening the administration of justice as the nation's federal courts continue to struggle to cope with judicial vacancies. Democrats have blocked up-or-down votes on 10 judicial nominees this Congress.

*In addition, Democrats refuse to go to conference on the following bills passed by the Senate: the Internet Tax Nondiscrimination Act (S. 150); the Charity Aid, Recovery, and Empowerment (CARE) Act of 2003 (S. 476); and the Workforce Investment Act (S. 1627/H.R. 1261). These bills will not become law until Democrats cease their obstructionism.*